

IDENTIFYING BOOTLEG/FRAUDULENT DVDS

Posted July 2026

Table of Contents

1. [Before inspecting physical material](#)
2. [Inspecting physical material–first glance](#)
3. [Inspecting physical material–detailed look](#)
4. [Checking disc contents](#)
5. [Additional notes and precautions](#)
6. [Link to additional Minerva resources](#)
7. [Links to additional external material and sources](#)
8. [Examples](#)

Before inspecting physical material

Research the release date of the material, especially for content that was released via streaming platform (Netflix, Disney +, etc.).

- Amazon, Walmart, and Google Gemini (AI Overview in Google search results) are examples of sources that may be unreliable for correct information.
 - Amazon and Walmart are examples of retailers that allow third-party vendors to sell their products on their platform. Those third-party vendors may intentionally or unintentionally sell bootleg DVD copies, especially for popular or highly anticipated films, or content that is “paywall locked” behind a streaming service. See an example of this [below](#).
 - Google Gemini may pull information from retailers with third-party vendors, or from comments made by users across the internet.
- Examples of sources that should be reliable:
 - <https://www.midwesttape.com/newreleases>
 - <https://www.dvdsreleasedates.com/>
 - Most major film releases have websites specifically for the film itself.
 - Content’s production company website.
 - Press releases from reputable news outlets.
- If you see listings for physical copies on major retail websites, check and see who the vendor/supplier is. Retailers will often phrase this as, “sold and shipped by.”
- Doing some preliminary research is especially important if you are adding the bib record to Minerva.

Inspecting the physical material—first glance

Case Insert

Copyright date

- The copyright date should match information on the distributor's website/other reputable sources.
 - The copyright year may be a year or two old compared to the current date—this is common with theatrical releases coming to DVD.
 - The dates listed on the disc and insert should match.
 - Give preference to the date(s) listed on the disc itself.
- Some inserts may have a copyright date for the package design.
- Some inserts/DVDs will list copyright dates for characters/properties.

Region/NTSC (National Television System Committee) code

- Most DVDs Minerva catalogers will see will be NTSC region 1.
 - Foreign films *may* have a different region; this will happen with donated foreign films, or if there was a mistake when purchasing from a vendor.
 - DVDs outside of region 1 may not play on patron DVD players, as devices are often “region locked.”
- DVDs with “all” or “0” as their region should be inspected closely. This is a reliable indicator that the copy is a bootleg.
 - Distributors will typically not have copies listed as “all” or “0” because their release dates, contents, pricing, and other information may differ from region to region.

Disc

Color

- The disc surface/color should be mirrored silver. Colored discs (typically gold) suggest it was burned/copied.
- Opaque discs that allow you to see the printing on the front/face of the disc from the back are most likely illegitimate.

Brand names/logos

- Brand names like Maxwell, Verbatim, or SmartBuy etched around the inner ring of the disc mean it was copied/burned, and is a bootleg.

DVD-9/DVD-5 advertisements & logos

- It is highly unusual for major distributors to advertise their discs being DVD-9 or DVD-5 format. It does not inherently mean the copy is a bootleg, but is a reliable indicator.
 - DVD-5 are single-sided, single-layer discs with around 120 minutes of capacity.
 - DVD-9 are single-sided, dual-layer discs with around 240 minutes of capacity.
 - DVD-5's are most common, with DVD-9's being used for longer and/or interactive content.

Disc printing

- Labels and printing on the disc should not appear pixelated, hand-written, muted, or photoshopped. Parts of the image being different levels of quality are a good indicator something is amiss.
- Bootleg printing on DVDs tend to also chip/crack/peel more frequently.

Case

The plastic case itself is an unreliable source of information, especially when accepting donations. Just because a case seems “abnormal” does not implicitly mean that the DVD is a bootleg. Distributors will occasionally make the case stand out; examples include collector's edition tins and colored cases.

Inspecting the physical material—detailed look

Case Insert

Insert image and text quality

- Check overall image and text quality—does it look like a professional release? Can you easily read the text? Is the text aligned? Are there spelling/grammar errors? Is it all in the same language?
- Photoshop/edited covers—does the image quality match across the whole cover? Do light levels change in what should be the same image? Are features on people contorted/missing?
- AI generated—Do people have the correct amount of body parts? Are faces and expressions realistic? Is there a “smoothness” to the image?

DTS logos

- Advertisements for DTS (Digital Surround Sound) on the front cover typically mean it is pirated.
 - DTS is a legitimate company and sound technology, but most DVDs have Dolby digital, and typically do not advertise their sound mastering on the front cover.

ISBN

- If there is an ISBN listed, use WorldCat to check if your item in-hand matches the results. Bootleg DVDs will often re-use existing ISBNs to appear legitimate.
 - Even if one or more of the search results matches your item, review the other items listed; a good sign that something is amiss is when other DVD titles are also in the results.
- Not all DVDs will have an ISBN listed.

Barcode

- Bootleg copies will often re-use or create barcodes for their inserts. If you scan the barcode, a bootleg copy will often scan as a different number than what is listed on the insert, or the barcode will not scan at all.
- Unlike printed material, ISBN and UPC barcode numbers typically do *not* match with DVDs.

Publisher/distributor number

- Also referred to as the proof of purchase, this number is typically near the barcode. If one is present, check the disc for a matching number. Referring to the distributor's website may also help confirm this number.
- Not all DVDs will have this number.

Awards/Editions

- If the DVD is a special/collectors edition, check to see if the distributor has records of this alternate edition.
- If awards are listed, check to see if they are legitimate awards. If they are, there should be records for what films have been recognized with said award. IMDB is a helpful resource for determining award legitimacy.

Ratings

- Confirm the film rating with a reputable source like IMDB, the film's website, or the distributor's website.
- Pay special attention to *why* the film is rated what is listed; bootleg copies often re-use ratings; often they will be a lower rating than the film actually earned in an effort to broaden the market.

Credits

- Bootleg copies will frequently have spelling errors, omissions, or cast/crew members who did not take part in the film listed. Again, IMDB is helpful to cross reference.

DVD and production studio symbols

- The insert should have the "DVD video" icon featured, typically at the very bottom of the back side under the credits. Some bootlegs may re-use fake inserts for blu-ray copies or vice-versa.
- Studio logos should be consistent across the packaging.

Disc

Copyright information

- The small text with copyright warnings and information should read from left to right.
- Cross reference copyright dates between the disc, insert, and online resources.
 - Bootleg copies will often not list any dates or distributor/production companies, and the warnings will be extremely basic.
- Check for grammatical errors.

Checking disc contents

If you have the time and ability to do so, playing a bootleg DVD in a player can reveal:

- A lack of FBI warnings
- Poor picture and sound quality—sometimes recorded in a theatre or off from a television screen
- Errors on menu screen (grammatical errors, formatting issues)
- Trailers for films produced by rival production studios
- Lack of features listed on insert/online sources
- Film plays without any menu when features need to be selected
 - Not all DVDs will have an interactive menu, but if features are listed like “special commentary” or “deleted scenes,” a menu is required to turn those features on/access them.

Additional notes and precautions

Identifying illicit copies of foreign films, low budget productions, or locally produced films can be challenging, as many of the resources and identifiers above will not be available. Focus on the absolute basics:

- Is there a region code listed?
- Is there a distribution and/or production company listed with copyright dates?
- Are there any kind of credits for the cast and crew available?
- Are there languages/subtitles available (more relevant for foreign films).

Consider if there is enough information to identify the film as a bootleg, or even if there is enough to properly catalog the film in compliance with Minerva standards.

Pay extra attention to any donated materials. Patrons may not realize they had a bootleg!

Some helpful reminders to keep in mind while adding an item into Minerva:

- If you don't find your item immediately, try a couple different searches! Try searching by:
 - Title
 - Keyword
 - Word (when scanning barcode)
 - PUBN # (if an ISBN is listed)

If you spot a bootleg DVD, especially of a recent release, notify the Minerva cataloging email list so other catalogers can check their copies.

Additional Relevant Minerva Resources

- [Minerva Cataloging Rules, Standards, and Instruction](#)
 - Bonus Disc/Multi Disc Policy
 - On Order DVDs
 - Split DVD/Blu-Ray Discs
 - Acceptable Cataloging for Minerva Libraries
 - Minerva RDA Cataloging Standards

Additional External Resources and Sources

1. <https://www.dvdsreleasedates.com/> – Helpful for confirming release dates
2. <https://www.midwesttape.com/newreleases> – Helpful for confirming release dates
3. <https://www.imdb.com/> – Generally helpful for cross referencing/confirming information
4. <https://search.worldcat.org/> – Search and confirm ISBN numbers. Account creation recommended to access detailed results.
5. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DVD_region_code – More information on NTSC region codes
6. <https://www.bandcds.co.uk/faqs/dvd-9-discs/> – Differences between DVD-5 and DVD-9 discs
7. <https://www.whathifi.com/advice/dts-vs-dolby-digital-whats-the-difference> – Differences between DTS and Dolby Digital
8. <https://movies.fandom.com/wiki/DTS> – More information on DTS
9. <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20240311-how-to-spot-a-manipulated-image> – Resource to help identify a manipulated image
10. <https://giijn.org/resource/guide-detecting-ai-generated-content/> – Resource to assist in identifying AI-generated images

Examples

Unbranded

Andor The Complete Season Two 2 (DVD) FREE SHIPPING!

★★★★★ (5.0) | [2 ratings](#)

Key item features

- **Series Format:** This product is a TV series presented in DVD format.
- **Complete Season:** It includes the complete second season of "Andor."
- **Brand New:** The item is brand new and has never been opened or removed from its manufacturer's sealing.
- **Specific Season:** This DVD set specifically contains Season 2 of the "Andor" series.
- **Movie Title:** The featured movie/TV title is "Andor the Complete Season Two."
- **Convenient Package:** Viewers can enjoy watching the entire second season in one convenient package.

[View all item details](#)

Generated by AI ⓘ

Specs

Brand
Unbranded

Formats
DVD

[View full specifications](#)

UPC: 191441000000

- Movie/TV Title: Andor the Complete Season Two
- Season: 2

ⓘ **We aim to show you accurate product information.** Manufacturers, suppliers and others provide what you see here, and we have not verified it. [See our disclaimer](#)

Now \$10.99 ~~\$17.97~~ ⓘ

You save \$6.98

Price when purchased online ⓘ

 Earn up to **5% cash back** with OnePay CashRewards. [Learn how](#)

 Free 30-day returns ⓘ

Add to cart

How you'll get this item:

 Shipping Arrives between Jun 5 - Jun 12 \$6.00	 Pickup Not available	 Delivery Not available
--	--	--

Ships to **Hope, 04847**

Arrives between **Jun 5 - Jun 12** | [More options](#)

Shipping fee \$6.00

 Sold and shipped by **Liu Han**

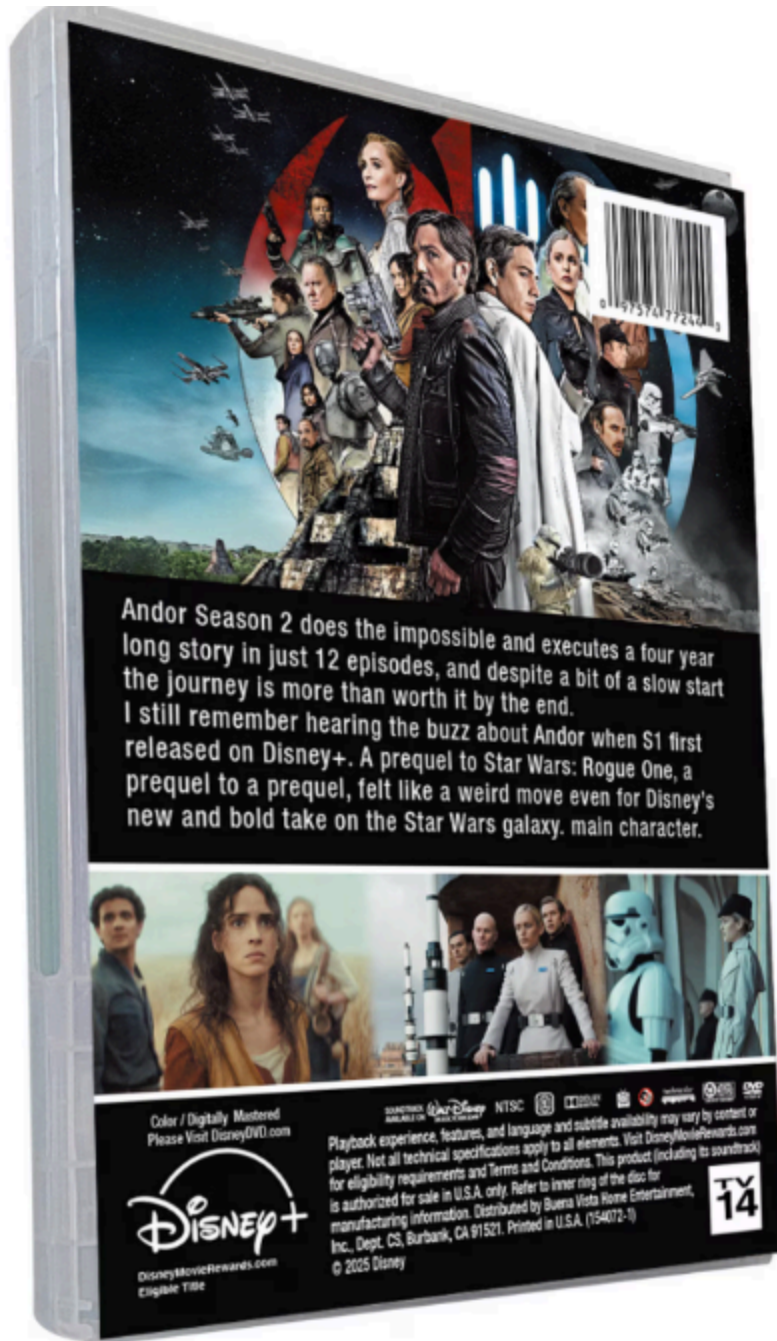
[Report an issue with this seller](#)

 **Free 30-day returns** [Details](#)

 [Add to list](#)

 [Add to registry](#)

- Above is an example of an illicit copy of "Andor: Season 2" on Walmart.
- In this case, it lists "Sold and shipped by Liu Han," so not an official distributor.
- A notice toward the bottom of the page states that Walmart has not verified this product. A cursory glance from a Google Search or AI-informed responses may not include this information.



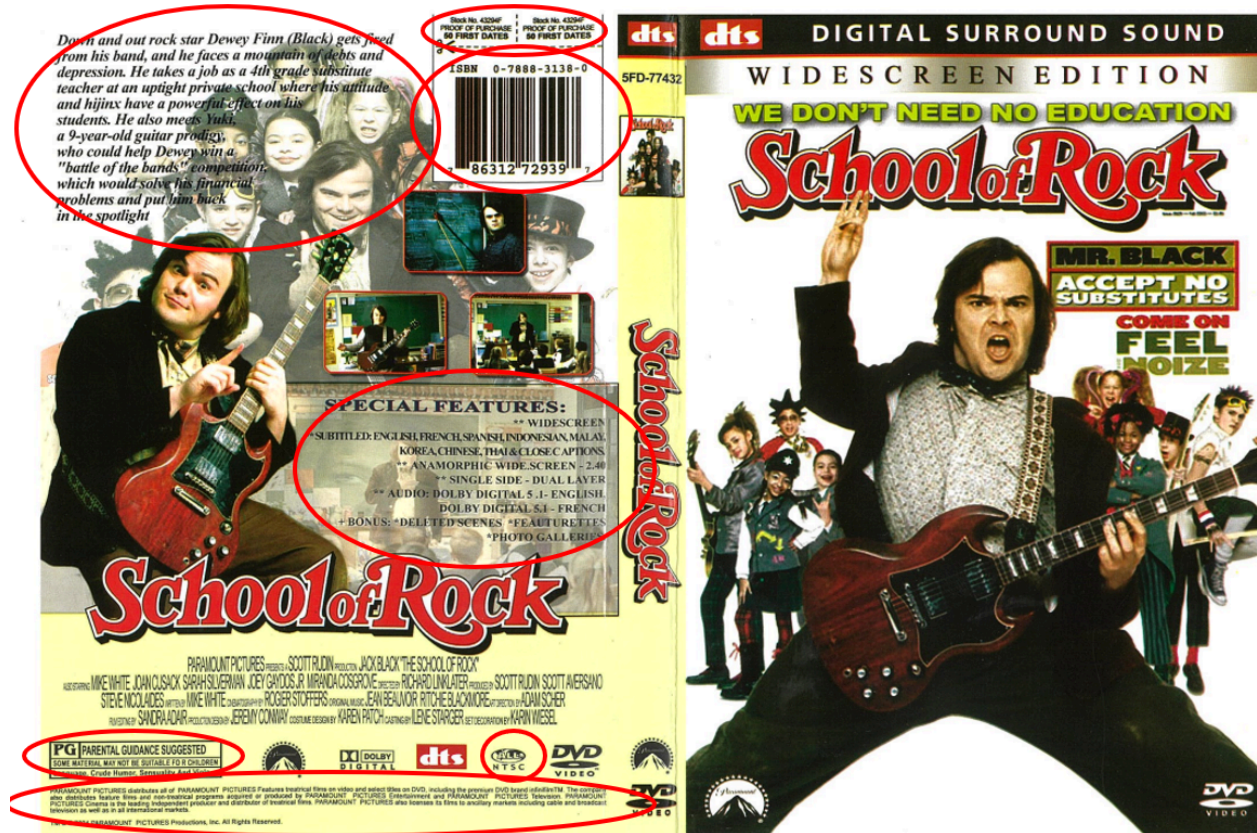
- A close-up of the DVD case of “Andor Season 2” listed on Walmart.
- The plot synopsis... leaves a lot to be desired.
- Case insert extends beyond case, implying image overlay.



- Searching the ISBN on WorldCat produces results including Hitch: The Date Doctor and The Little Mermaid.
- Barcode does not scan.
- DTS advertisement prominently featured.
- All NTSC regions.
- Peter Jackson is listed in the credits and was not involved with this film.
- Film rating is incorrect; film is rated R for sequences of graphic violence.
- The quote from "David Hayes" cannot be sourced.
- "Dove Awards" seem to be music related awards and have no record of nominating this film for "Best Christian Movie of the year"
(<https://doveawards.com/awards/past-winners>)
- Overall image quality is inconsistent, and text is difficult to read.



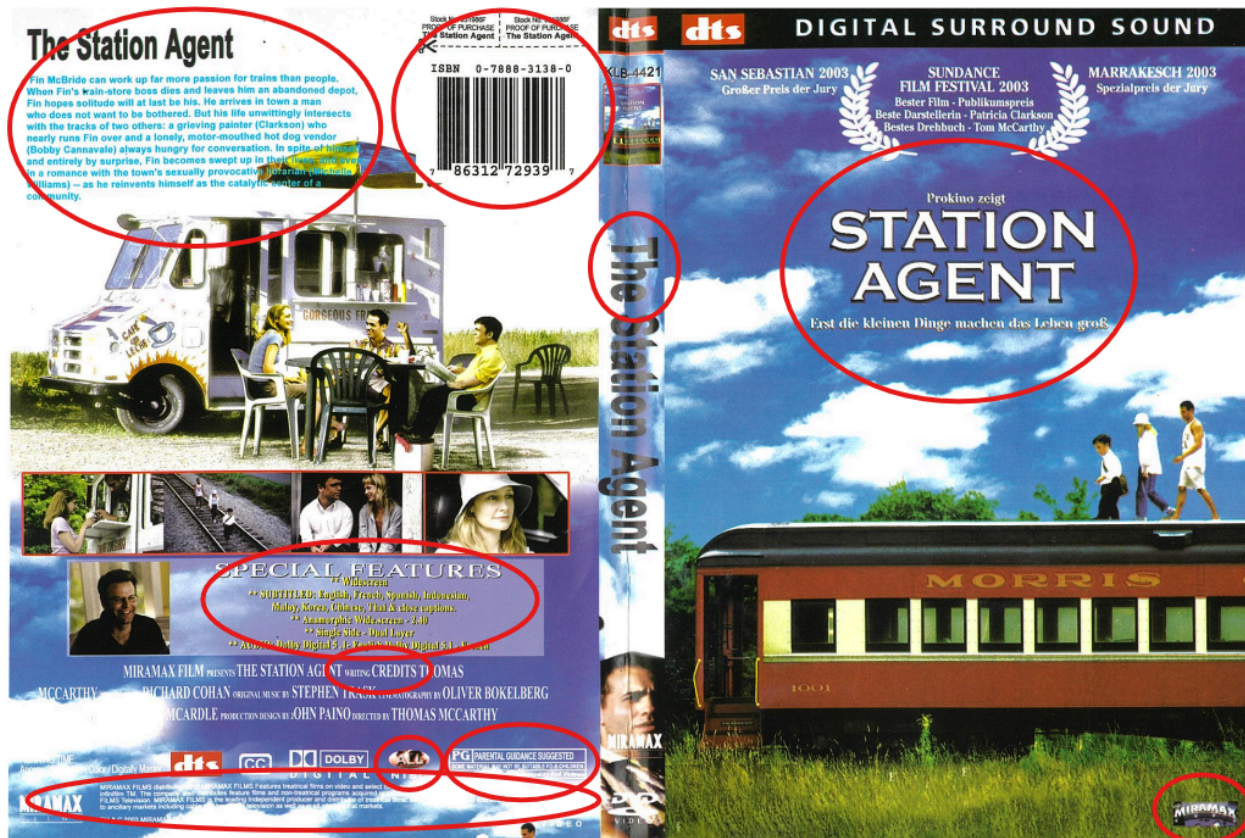
- DVD-9 symbol generally suggests it is a bootleg copy.
- All NTSC region symbol.
- Copyright text is basic, does not include production studio name or dates, and is read from right to left.
- Disc color (on right) is gold-ish compared to a legitimate copy of “Tenet,” which is more silver.



- Description of film is difficult to read, poorly worded with grammatical errors.
- Proof of purchase is for "50 First Dates."
- ISBN produces results for "Tarzan and Jane" on WorldCat.
- Barcode does not scan.
- Special features have formatting and grammatical errors.
- Rating is incorrect; this film was rated PG-13 for "some rude humor and drug references."
- All NTSC region symbol.
- Fine print reads (including spelling errors), "PARAMOUNT PICTURES distributes all of PARAMOUNT PICTURES Features theatrical films on video and select titles on DVD, including the premium DVD brand infinifilm™. The company also distributes feature films and non-theatrical programs acquired or produced by PARAMOUNT PICTURES Entertainment and PARAMOUNT PICTURES Television. PARAMOUNT PICTURES Cinema is the leading Independent producer and distributor of theatrical films. PARAMOUNT PICTURES also licenses its films to ancillary markets including cable and broadcast television as well as in all international markets. TM & C 2004 PARAMOUNT PICTURES Productions, Inc. All Rights Reserved."



- DVD-9 symbol implies it is a bootleg.
- Copyright text is basic and doesn't include any dates or company names.
- Disc itself is extremely opaque.



- Inconsistent and incorrect title of film.
- German used on front cover, English on back cover.
- Inconsistent “Miramax” logos.
- Plot synopsis and fine print on the bottom back cover are difficult to read and have grammatical errors.
- Barcode does not scan. ISBN is the same as the “School of Rock” example above.
- Formatting and grammatical errors in Special Features list.
- Formatting and grammatical errors in the credits.
- All NTSC rating.
- Film rating is incorrect; correct rating is R for “language and some drug content.”



- DVD-9 symbol is featured.
- Copyright text is read from right to left and does not include any dates or production company names.
- Disc color (left) is gold compared to a legitimate copy of “The Eternals,” which is silver.